

**Testimony of Hilda Maria Valdespino – Director of Pro Access, Bethel’s Teen Center and President, Inspired Learning LLC**

***cocerning funding for Regional Action Councils in***

H.B. No. 6824 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.

*Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services - March 6, 2015*

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon and members of the Appropriations subcommittee, my name is Hilda Maria Valdespino. I am offering testimony in strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the regional action councils.

In my community the Housatonic Valley Coalition Against Substance Abuse (HVCASA) has been pivotal in uniting the 22 communities it serves with

- Programs
- Services
- Education
- Maximizing funding resources
- Drug and Alcohol Prevention Publicity

They provide the guidance and resources for surveys to be conducted throughout our communities in order for the local prevention councils to know how best to target their community’s issues and challenges.

They have been instrumental in raising the awareness and educating school personnel and community members on Suicide Prevention and the One Word One Voice campaign. We recently experienced a suicide of a beloved teacher in our community. The Bethel Local Prevention Council immediately reached out to HVCASA for information and resources to best manage the situation.

They have been instrumental in bringing the school system, police and parents together to discuss the issues of alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention. They raise money to support the efforts of the local prevention councils in order for us to maximize the funding resources. Throughout the years their professional development workshops for the communities have been invaluable programs we would not have been able to attend without their support.

Bethel neighbors Newtown and we are still feeling the effects of the Sandy Hook crisis. HVCASA has been instrumental in helping all the communities in this area to work together to address the critical issues that arose from that tragedy.

HVCASA is on the cutting edge of the latest consequences of opioids, e-cigarettes, marijuana legalization. They share this information with us in a timely manner. This information dissemination immediately unites the 22 towns to address the issue as a collective force. We can not afford to lose our RAC. I am quite confident that if this funding is eliminated the negative impact on the community would be felt immediately.

I personally have been the chairperson the Bethel Community Care Coalition for the past 6 years. HVCASA’s role in helping our Coalition provide education and resources to our town has been invaluable. They are professional community organizers who know how to connect people with resources. They know how to connect people with education. They know how to connect people with people and we can not do the work of creating healthy communities without them.  
Thank you.